

Keeping it in the family: Alfred Cointreau on preserving brand legacy

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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As one of the oldest orange-flavoured liqueurs in the world, the [Cointreau](#) brand has a lot of history behind it. It was in Saint-Laud in Angers, France in the year 1849 that brothers Edourd-Jean and Adolphe Cointreau opened the doors to the family distillery. Previously in the confectionary and cake-making business, they saw the need for higher quality naturally-flavoured liqueurs that were unavailable at the time. More than 160 years later, the famed French liqueur has retained a loyal following and serves as a cornerstone in over 300 cocktail recipes.



A 6th generation scion of the Cointreau family, Alfred Cointreau is tasked with preserving the legacy of the Cointreau brand in his role as heritage manager. As a brand ambassador, Alfred educates distributors and bartenders about the versatility of the liqueur, and as a member of the Cointreau family is in a position to intimately share the rich history behind the name.

As expected, his job takes him travelling to all corners of the Earth, and in his first book '*Night-Time Walks*', Alfred shares a selection of his most memorable experiences from some of his favourite spots around the globe.

Commenting on the book, Alfred says, "Thanks to my travels, I've met many engaging people and discovered captivating places. That's why I wanted to compile a written record of these moments in the form of a jumble of volatile memories, cardboard menus, business cards, notes taken on the fly, and photos I uploaded to Instagram or that capture a taste memory. I've taken something from each of these cities that hold a special place in my heart. In these notes, my nights can be read like an open book. Perusing these pages is like sipping a margarita: a burst of freshness, vivacity and escapism."

The launch of '*Night-Time Walks*' recently brought Alfred to Cape Town, where we sat down with him to chat about the inspiration behind the book, South Africa's emerging cocktail culture and the responsibility of preserving Cointreau's legacy.

What inspired you to get involved with the family business?

For two main reasons. The first was passion. I worked at a number of different businesses – in sales, in a grocery store, in the advertising department for a newspaper – but I was not really passionate about these jobs. My father isn't involved with Cointreau, he loves vintage cars so he opened a renovation garage, and every morning I saw him go to his garage with a smile. The same can be said for my grandfather, who until the end of his life at 90 years old went to the Cointreau distillery with pride because he was passionate about it.

Secondly, I realised that after the fourth generation in the Cointreau family, nobody in the family would be directly connected with the brand, which means that nobody would be able to share the legacy we have behind us in a personal way. I wanted to be the next generation to take care of the brand and to find my passion, and I did.



■ ***What was it like growing up in the Cointreau family?***

It was quite normal. We are made aware that we carry a name that's known around the world, so we are educated on how to respect it and to be humble with it. We are encouraged to preserve it.

■ ***Congrats on the launch of your first book. What led you to write 'Night-Time Walks'?***

We live in the digital age, and in the 21st century everything is fast-paced. To me, a book is something a little bit more traditional; you can touch it, you can smell it. In the spirits industry everything revolves around the concept of sharing – sharing your passion, a cocktail, sharing an experience. Through this book, I wanted to share some of my memorable moments while travelling as the Cointreau heritage manager.

■ ***How important is the South African market to Cointreau?***

To be completely honest it's not our first market, but it's a priority market. The US is a first market and so is Europe. South Africa is one of our priority markets because we can feel that it's the beginning of the cocktail culture here, especially in Cape Town and Johannesburg. You have beautiful bars and the weather you have helps produce beautiful fruits and ingredients to mix into cocktails.

We want to develop more knowledge around Cointreau and inspire and educate bartenders, clients and the public about how to drink it and the possibilities in terms of cocktails. It's a part of my job to educate people.



■ ***Considering that Cointreau is over 160 years old, how well do you think the brand has aged?***

If we're here 168 years after the creation of the distillery, it means we make a good product. Especially in Europe, people consider Cointreau as a grandmother spirit. Everybody has a bottle of Cointreau at home, they remember that their grandfather or grandmother used to drink it, but they don't necessarily know how to drink it or how to appreciate it.

When their grandmother tasted Cointreau in her 20's she decided it would remain part of her life. It's a real love story. What was good for your grandmother is still good for you today because the recipe has never changed.

■ ***How would you describe the Cointreau brand and what do you love most about it?***

Cointreau is an iconic spirit with an iconic bottle. The recipe has remained the same throughout the years and the bottle is known for its exquisite design. Everything you need to know about the Cointreau can be found on the bottle.

I love that you can find it everywhere in the world – from Cape Town to Paris, New York, and Beijing.

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